

Town of Barrington
Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 16, 2016

Members Present:

Matthew Amaral, Robert Humm, Mark Etheridge, Jim Sanderson, Buddy Violet, and Dick Wilbur. **Absent:** Joan Warren.

1. Call to Order at 7:06 PM
2. May 19 Minutes were approved unanimously.
3. Chair Rob Humm announced that the Committee's official email address - EDC@Barrington.RI.gov - was now operational and listed on the EDC webpage. For now, he and scribe Dick Wilbur have access to the account, and will monitor incoming emails until such time as we need to officially agree on how to process emails addressed to the Committee. Rob next reported on the status of the draft Food Truck Ordinance, which he presented to the Town Council at its last meeting. The Council accepted the proposed ordinance and passed it on to the Town Solicitor for review. The Council will formally discuss the draft at its July 25 meeting. Town Council member Kate Weymouth raised the question of the proposed 800 foot exclusion zone for food trucks, noting that in some parts of town, it will be difficult for a food truck to park in public areas and remain at least 800 from the front door of a brick and mortar restaurant. Matt noted the initial response on the part of one Council member related to the volume/size of the proposed ordinance; his interpretation of that comment leads him to wonder whether the EDC ought to provide a summary (or perhaps bullet points) in advance before presenting the Council with lengthy documentation. Rob suggested we address this concern on a case by case basis, and agreed to ask for feedback from the Council regarding the length of the proposed ordinance.
4. As Ms. Jessica Pflaumer, Town of Bristol Economic Development Coordinator, was unable to attend the meeting, the Meeting tabled items 3 and 4.
5. The Meeting next turned to the issue of signage and the current ordinance providing signing regulations and procedures. The EDC - along with the Planning Board, the Zoning Board, the Technical Review Commission (TRC) and the Barrington Business Association - has been asked to consider the current sign ordinance and to report back to the Council by the date of the September Council meeting. On a practical note, doing so means the EDC must deliberate and draft a report in two months, i.e., by its August 18 meeting. In light of this short-fused request, the Meeting discussed a timeline and ways to effectively review, discuss and draft a meaningful report for the Town Council by

our August meeting. Jim Sanderson posited - and all members agreed - that the EDC could be useful by soliciting and synthesizing input from the business community. The Meeting agreed that each member would pose three questions to at least five local businesses and report their findings at the July meeting for consolidation and formatting into a draft report to be agreed upon at the August meeting. The three questions to be asked include: What was/has been your experience in obtaining approval for signage related to your business?; What recommendations would you suggest to improve/streamline the sign approval process in Barrington?; and, Do you think that a two-track process would be useful to existing and new businesses? A two-track approach would provide a simplified and streamlined process for approval of signs that a) follow pre-approved signage templates or b) make changes to existing signage within pre-approved standards. New sign designs would require completion of a multi-step approval process similar to the existing one. To avoid overlap, by the end of the week of June 20 the members of the EDC will email Merrie DeSisto with their list of five businesses they will canvas, and she will be asked to compile the master list and share it with EDC membership.

6. The Meeting next began discussion of a proposed public business seminar to be organized by the EDC for Barrington businesses. Given the lead time needed to organize such an event, the Meeting agreed to look at dates in early 2017 for an evening program. Buddy shared his experience with these kinds of events, noting that businesses respond well to these kinds of programs if the information provided is relevant and useful. He believes that inviting representatives from the financial world will be a draw as businesses often do not know what resources are out there, especially related to government-sponsored or funded programs providing access to capital or tax incentives. In light of this discussion, the Meeting agreed to include a fourth question while canvassing local businesses about signage issues, to wit: What kinds of topics would you find useful to learn about at a public seminar? The Meeting also discussed possible venues. Dick suggested that an appropriate venue would be one that could legally accept sponsorship or donations (of money or in kind) for the event as the EDC is not legally structured to handle money or donations. Matt suggested we approach the Country Club as they have a record of supporting fundraising events and other public functions. The Meeting also agreed that at some point not too far in the future we would need to brief the Town Council on our plans and receive their permission to move forward. Members also agreed that the Town ought to participate and welcome the opportunity to engage with the community in such a program.
7. Future Meetings through the end of 2016 remain as previously reported: July 21; August 18; September 15; October 20; November 17; and December 15.
8. Under Open Discussion, Matt reported that the Main Street America process being championed by the East Bay Chamber of Commerce is going forward, and that the Roger Williams University Community Partnership Center has

been given the lead on the initiative. Matt, in his role as chair of the Barrington Business Association, has been asked to identify five Barrington residents to lead the process in Barrington. He welcomes suggestions as to possible nominees.

9. The Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.